

Meet the Workers; History of Scagliola, Part III...

David Hayles & Douglas Mack, *Hayles & Howe Ornamental Plasterwork & Scagliola*

Merry Christmas! This is it – the last of three installments about the scagliola in the State Capitol. Thank you to **David Hayles** and **Douglas Mack**, pictured at right, for this information. When we left off last week, you (as the Italian scagliola expert in the early 1900s) had just wrapped the scagliola, which is wet plaster with varying shades of dark pigment and veins to simulate marble, around the column. At this point, the column has the texture of the oil cloth that you peeled off of it. It is not very attractive, and not looking much like real marble.

Time for the finishing touches. First, you examine the seam areas. You don't want the seam to show, and you don't want too much dark or too much light or too many veins where the edges meet. If there is a part anywhere on the column that doesn't look like marble to your expert eye, you cut it out, mix the correct color of plaster, and replace it. You are after the subtle pattern of marble, not a bold look.



Next comes the “stoning.” You buff the column down to a matte finish. As you rub it with a curved stone called a “snake stone” that comes from south of Glasgow, Scotland, you fill in the small holes in the plaster and keep buffing, gently, with finer and finer stones. In some areas the scagliola plaster is only 1/16 of an inch thick, so this takes a delicate touch – no heavy handed Italian experts allowed! You are finished when the plaster has the smooth matte finish of real marble with a convincing pattern of light and dark areas and veins that simulate marble.

The scagliola in the State Capitol has been sealed with a plastic coating at sometime in the past, and according to **David** and **Douglas**, part of this coating needs to be removed during the renovation process. However, **David Hayles** (pictured at left) says that overall, the scagliola is in good condition and doesn't need the massive amount of work that some scagliola has involved during the course of his career. ***(David's career during the thirty years since he founded Hayles & Howe has been illustrious -- he has sealed columns in Buckingham Palace for***

the Queen of England's new picture gallery and has worked on the renovation of Windsor Castle following the fire, working closely with Prince Philip.)

Next Week: See the “before” pictures of the forthcoming **Contemplation Room**, that locked area above the fourth floor that will be another improvement brought about by the Idaho Capitol Restoration, 2001 - 2005.

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